

Teaching Philosophy

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I have two goals in teaching German as a foreign language. The first goal is to make my students proficient in the German language. I incorporate sound pedagogical methods in my instruction to meet the learning objectives of each course, and make use of modern technology in order to keep instruction interesting and efficient. The second goal is to instill the same joy of learning about a foreign language and cultures as I have experienced myself during the course of my education. The learning process should be enjoyable both for the student and the instructor. The process of learning German should appeal to the student at a personal level. I hope that each student of mine will have a positive experience and desire to continue learning beyond the minimum requirements. I wish to show my students the benefits of linguistic and cross-cultural knowledge: open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, entertainment and personal gratification. I transmit my knowledge, my curiosity and enthusiasm to my students and colleagues.

It is also important to stay abreast of current developments in German-speaking countries, in order to keep the teaching material fresh for the youngest generation of students. Students should feel that they are able to use authentic and relevant material. It is, for example, difficult to connect with students using popular music and references that are 20 years old, often older than the students themselves. Part of my teaching process is to understand the interests and goals of the students.

In the course of my academic career, teaching language, culture, and literature courses, I have developed a communicative approach that stresses oral and written proficiency and grammatical accuracy in a learner-centered environment. Given the nature of foreign-language learning in a classroom environment, I feel that the communicative method that I have developed is effective pedagogically. Students are encouraged to speak with one another, not just with the teacher, and have more opportunity to practice their language skills. They are allowed the flexibility to discuss subjects that are relevant, interesting, or amusing to them. I have seen first-hand how well the students progress, increasing their knowledge of the foreign language, and their fluency in said language. They are able express themselves creatively, naturally, and effectively; they could thrive, not just survive, in an immersive situation.

The exposure to a foreign culture can open students up to new perspectives and allow them to see beyond a single point of view, increasing tolerance to ideas and beliefs that are different than the student's own. It is for this reason that I also strongly encourage my students to participate in study abroad and exchange programs. I feel that study abroad should be a requirement for any foreign language or international studies major program. I am also enthusiastic about helping students to gain financial support for their study abroad programs, both through counseling and letters of recommendation.

The Internet has enabled relatively easy access to authentic texts, such as periodicals and literary texts, multimedia in the form of films, television broadcasts, and music, both popular and traditional. To this end, I attempt to utilize modern technology as much as practicable, both within and outside the classroom. My own technical skills and experience with computer technology are definitely assets in the classroom, yet use of

technology in teaching must not be burdensome nor interfere with the learning process. I have learned through experience that computerized instruction needs to be balanced with practical considerations like efficiency (both time and cost), and network reliability. The considerable media and technology resources of a college or university should not be overlooked.

While computer and multimedia technology is a valuable tool in the instruction of foreign languages, it is my thorough knowledge of the target language's grammar and stylistic and pragmatic usage that serves as the basis for my instruction. As a linguist, I believe that my knowledge of German, as well as its historical development and modern related languages such as English, Dutch and the Scandinavian languages, allows me to bring a supplemental aspect of the German language to light for students that they might not otherwise encounter. This complements the study of literature, which is invaluable for improving vocabulary, enhances the skill sets of critical analysis and thinking skills, and provides pure entertainment. Indeed, in my courses I use authentic texts and film to expand my students' vocabulary, and to encourage them to think critically about the text and overarching course themes.

While I feel that I have the necessary skill set, knowledge, and desire to effectively and creatively teach German as a foreign language, I am still open to new ideas. I am a teacher who is still actively learning new things. I am constantly trying to improve my own classroom teaching, and to establish a better rapport with my students, while still setting reasonable expectations. It is important to stay current of teaching methods and pedagogical research, in order to be an effective educator, in addition to cultural developments. Of course I also welcome the opportunity to learn about new technology and to incorporate it into my instruction.

In order to effectively learn to communicate in German, my students are given the flexibility to explore their own interests and express themselves. My students make use of authentic and relevant materials, and are able to see the practical application of their language skills and knowledge. I want my students to enjoy learning a foreign language, to learn it effectively, and to take advantage of all possible educational resources. They should look forward to coming to class and participating. I want my course to be their favorite course every semester.